TUFS NEWS

Autumn 2004 Newsletter of Trade Union Friends of Searchlight Issue 13

HOPE WINS OVER HATE!

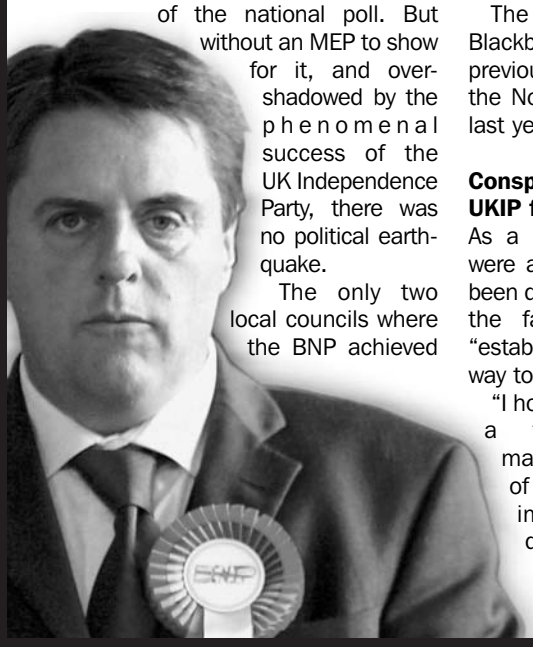
No Breakthrough for the BNP

Even into the final week of the June elections the BNP was forecasting success.

On the eve of the elections Griffin himself told supporters: "The British National Party is on target to take between 14 and 16% of the Euro vote in our key regions, winning a record number of council seats, positions on the Greater London Assembly, and breaking through with three or four MEPs. We are on target, in short, for a political breakthrough!"

In the end it simply did not happen. The BNP failed to make any advance in the council elections and if anything slipped back in its key areas. It failed to get anyone elected to the London Assembly and, more significantly, it did not get a single person elected to the European Parliament.

It did secure a worrying 808,200 votes in the European election, just under 5% of the national poll. But without an MEP to show for it, and over-shadowed by the phenomenal success of the UK Independence Party, there was no political earthquake.



The only two local councils where the BNP achieved anything like a breakthrough were Bradford, where it took four seats, and Epping Forest, where it took three. But these council victories only looked good when set against the party's more general failure. The BNP managed to get its three councillors in Calderdale re-elected but this was way short of the ten it was confidently boasting on the BNP website in early June.

In other areas where the BNP already had councillors the party either stood still or, more commonly, fell back. In Burnley the BNP won one councillor but lost another. More significantly, its share of the vote fell from 10,000 in 2002 to 4,500.

There were several areas where the BNP expected to have councillors elected but failed. In the North West this included Oldham and Pendle, in Yorkshire and The Humber it included Leeds and Wakefield, and in the West Midlands it included Walsall.

The BNP made no headway in Blackburn, an authority where it had previously had a councillor and across the North East it saw its vote down on last year.

Conspiracy theories and the UKIP factor

As a whole, the local election results were a disaster for the BNP and it has been quick to cry foul. Across the country the fascists are claiming that the "establishment" literally cheated their way to victory.

"I honestly believe we are now living in a time where the electoral malpractices of the third world 'many of them Marxist inspired' have been imported into our once truly democratic country," wrote John Salvage, Black Country organiser.

In true conspiratorial manner the BNP has even put down the rise of the UKIP as simply an anti-BNP plot, believing that the threat from UKIP was deliberately talked up to channel votes away from the BNP.

But while support for the main political parties plummeted, and the BNP did worse than it had hoped, the UKIP came away with 12 MEPs, securing 2,650,768 votes. Its 16.1% vote share was up more than 9% compared to the 1999 European election.

The UKIP entered the election with a £2m campaign led by the publicist Max Clifford. Fronting the slick operation was the equally slick TV show host Robert Kilroy-Silk.

The UKIP has been beset with internal disputes over the years and bitter leadership struggles. Its founder

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Police Force give BNP the boot!

The Association of Chief Police Officers have announced that BNP members who are police officers or staff will be sacked. A police spokesperson said the force have "an overriding duty to promote race equality". Membership of the BNP contradicted this duty.

BNP spokesperson Phil Edwards declared that the leadership would advise BNP members to keep their membership secret. He said "we support the police and are strong on policies of law and order. We are ostracised and this will damage our reputation". Or as anti-fascists would say confirm it!

■ BNP bank accounts shut down – six arrests so far ■ Our unions – Our rules

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TV EXPOSE OF BNP

Bank accounts shut down – Six arrests … so far

The BBC documentary Secret Agent has sent shock waves through the BNP. Undercover reporter, Jason Gwynne, infiltrated the BNP in Bradford. He revealed a group racked by what lawyers have described as criminal levels of racism, violence and anti Semitism.

During the programme, The Secret Agent, one prospective council candidate repeatedly says he wants to kill "Pakis"; another admits he has spent three weeks pushing dog excrement through the letterbox of an Asian business; and a third is filmed plotting to torch a van the party believes is storing anti-BNP leaflets produced by the TUC. This underlines again their sham attempt to portray themselves as a normal democratic party.

During the programme Mr Griffin, who has been convicted of incitement to racial hatred, tells cheering supporters that Islam is a "wicked, vicious faith" and that the Qur'an tells Muslims it is acceptable to rape white women and children. John Tyndall, the BNP's founder and former leader, is seen giving a speech in which he calls Michael Howard Michael Hecht - a reference to the Tory leader's Jewish background - after Mr Howard described the BNP as "thugs in suits". The BNP's former Bradford organiser Andy Sykes, turned anti racist mole when he was told to organise to attack TUC members or labour people or left wingers at a fun day organised by Bradford TUC. He contacted Bradford TUC, spoke to Searchlight and began to work as a "mole". Despite death threats he courageously insists he and his family will stay in their home in Bradford.

BNP boss Nick Griffin (centre) with Searchlight mole Andy Sykes (left) and the BBC's Jason Gwynne at the BNP's dinner for Jean-Marie Le Pen in April

Evidence from the film has resulted in Barclays bank's announcement that it is to close accounts held by the BNP. Holding a bank account is a requirement for a political party to operate. Nick Griffin described the closure as "absolutely scandalous" and threatened legal action against the bank.

The police and Crown Prosecution Service after reviewing the tapes have arrested six men, all from West Yorkshire. The arrests came as 43 MPs backed a motion calling on the police to take action against anyone found to have committed a crime in relation to the documentary. They also called on four members of Bradford Council to resign, arguing that their victories last month were gained "by deception" and that the BNP should fight elections under their "true colours".

The operation, between Bradford TUC and Searchlight is a huge success for intelligence led localised campaigning.

Calderdale council in West Yorkshire, which controversially appointed a BNP councillor, Adrian Marsden, to a race equality committee, have scrapped the panel after criticism from MPs and fellow councillors.

continued from page 1

and original leader, Dr Alan Sked, a lecturer in history at the London School of Economics, had continued battles with racists in the organisation.

Sked found himself faced with numerous racists in the party and wrote an article in *The Spectator* renewing his earlier claims that the UKIP had been taken over by the far right and become open to the whims of extremists.

Its present leader is Roger Knapman, who has just been elected as an MEP for the South Western region. Knapman has rubbed shoulders with some very right-wing people.

The fact is that UKIP represented a more respectable repository for a populist right-wing vote than the fascist BNP in the June elections.

Outfoxed

But the BNP was outfoxed by anti-BNP campaigners particularly in its key target authorities. While the BNP ran a lacklustre and fairly incompetent campaign, anti-fascists used more sophisticated and targeted techniques to defeat the fascists and united anti BNP opponents, the churches, trade unions and local people.

Everyone was surprised with the poor quality of BNP literature. More significantly, the BNP appeared to do little actual campaigning. Much of the fault must lie at Griffin's door. He failed to give a proper lead and made many of the most crucial mistakes himself.

None of this takes away the UKIP factor. Without the appearance of Robert Kilroy-Silk the BNP might have ended up with three or four MEPs and certainly representation on the London Assembly. However, the UKIP made little difference to the defeat of the BNP in the local elections.

The BNP will also never have a better opportunity to break into the political mainstream. The BNP is now demoralised and, having raised expectations to such an extent, Griffin's own position is weakened.

Anti-fascists cannot ignore the BNP's European election result and must address the problem, but we have time to do that and do it seriously. For the BNP these elections were a disaster and this is in no small part due to the small army of local anti-fascist groups, particularly in the key target areas that saw off the biggest BNP challenge, who enthusiastically and tirelessly espoused Searchlight's strategy of localised campaigning. Much of this work went largely unnoticed and most of it was unglamorous but it was essential to seeing off the biggest fascist challenge in our recent political history. Now we need to carry forward intensive work to defeat them.

For full election results, analysis and news visit **www.stopthebnp.com**.

Our Unions Our Rules

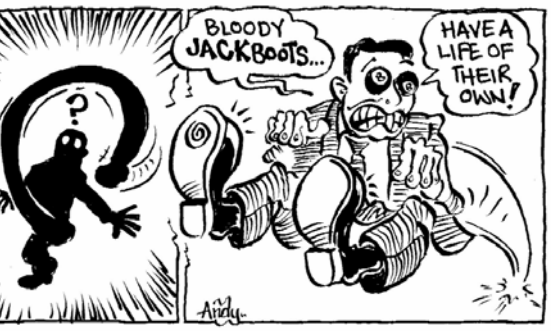
Infiltration of trade unions by far right organisations, including in particular the BNP is a major issue for trade unionists. A number of unions have had difficulty trying to exclude or expel fascists.

Unions have been taken to industrial tribunals on the grounds that exclusion or expulsion breaches the Trade Union and labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 S174. This section breaches human rights law which guarantees freedom of association. It also stops unions having the right, under their own rules, to decide who their members will be.

The government has proposed an amendment to S174 in the Employment Relations Bill with the aim of protecting unions. But it doesn't go far enough - it eases the liability of unions but does not remove it.

Trade unions will still be liable to individuals who have been excluded under the rules of the union for membership of a political party offensive to the union, like the BNP. Unions will also be required to accept and retain in membership known members of the BNP. No other organisation in the UK e.g. churches, charities, political parties, sports clubs are constrained in this way.

Under the proposed amendment trade unions will act unlawfully if membership of the BNP alone is the main reason for exclusion or expulsion. Trade unions should be free to expel people in accordance with their own rules. Fascists will always attempt to infiltrate unions and take them over. Surely the government should be well aware of the threat and the dangers and amend the law accordingly.



Unions build against the BNP

Less than two weeks after the elections of 10 June we spent a couple of days on the Searchlight stall at UNISON's national conference in Bournemouth.

During our visit we handed out 3,000 copies of *TUFS News* and the remaining copies of the Searchlight special election newspaper of which 1.4 million copies were distributed during the election campaign in cooperation with the trade unions. Unison alone put out 125,000 copies mainly in Yorkshire, London and the South East.

We spoke to very many union members who had taken part in our joint work. All were boosted by the chance to fight back against the BNP. Some reported that their names and addresses had appeared on the nazi Redwatch website in an attempt to intimidate them. These sisters and brothers were not for turning.

We brought back to the Searchlight team messages from all over the country from union members who were proud to work alongside us, as we are of having the chance to work with them. Our work and experience at UNISON Conference can be replicated at many other union conferences and meetings

Since the last *TUFS News* we have attended and spoken at dozens of trade union meetings from national conferences to local branches. These include: TUC Black Workers, Birmingham TUC rally, NASUWT , T&G Region 1, FBU , NATHFE, BFAWU, PCS, CONNECT and many others.

TGWU should act on logo misuse

John Walker, a BNP candidate in the elections of 10 June, put the TGWU's logo on the BNP website to promote his campaign. While Walker, who has recently been appointed national treasurer of the BNP, is a TGWU member, this gives him no right to misuse its logo to promote the aims and objectives of a party based on hate.

The TGWU would do well to learn from the action that senior police officer John Grieve took five years ago. The former head of the Anti-Racist and Violent Crime Task Force got the Metropolitan Police Service to sue the BNP for its misuse of the MPS logo. It cost the BNP nearly £20,000.

Post and rail workers in BNP's sights

The showing of the *Secret Agent* investigative documentary on BBC1 has sent the BNP into a tail spin. Running true to form the BNP and its nazi allies have been busy on various websites threatening anyone who helped make the programme.

The expose appears to have frustrated the BNP's plans to step up work within the trade union movement. BNP members in unions are now very worried about exposing themselves to the ridicule of their fellow workers and facing potential union action against them.

Currently the BNP is targeting ASLEF and the CWU. The CWU was a happy hunting ground for racists and nazis as far back as the 1960s, when Searchlight exposed a cell structure nearly 60 strong in London sorting offices made up of members of the original BNP. Our work led to the arrest and conviction of one man for theft of post and the exposure of the rest via a series of parliamentary questions.

What is incredible is how the BNP leadership have always totally misunderstood trade unionism. In the run-up to the elections of 10 June they issued a double-sided open letter to CWU members asking them to 'dish the dirt' on their fellow workers.

It is clear that they were intending to start putting up secret BNP members for election at all levels of the CWU after 10 June. The TV expose may now have dented those plans but vigilance is still essential.

stopthebnp.com

Stop the BNP was set up to counter racism and fascism in elections and beyond. Following our success in combating BNP lies in the run up to June 2004 elections, we want to ensure that Stop the BNP continues to play a pivotal role in confronting nazis at every turn. The most recent elections may be over, but the BNP threat still remains. At Searchlight we want to make sure that people know the full story about who the BNP are and what they really stand for. As such, Stop the BNP will continue to serve the anti-fascist movement in between major elections, providing up to date news and analysis.

Everything you need...

- Resources
- Local Contacts
- News
- Features
- Election information

... to fight the BNP

Plus a special section for Trade Unionists, as well as sports stars speaking out against racism.

Find all this and more at www.stopthebnp.com

Searchlight Fighting Fund – Urgent Appeal

Searchlight worked with over 50 local grassroots anti fascists and anti racist groups in the lead up to the 2004 elections. Trade unionists were centrally involved in these local campaigns – often playing a leading role. Around 1.4 million Searchlight Special newspapers – with 26 customised editions – were distributed all over the country particularly in areas under greatest threat. It is a tribute to the hard work of grassroots anti fascists that the BNP did not make a breakthrough in the elections.

The BNP now have 21 councillors and there is still the need to continue the work all year round. We need to build the financial base to develop and extend campaigning work. Work with unions in the workplace and in communities is vital. Trade Unionists are the back bone of anti fascist work – **please support the Searchlight Fighting Fund**

Name/position

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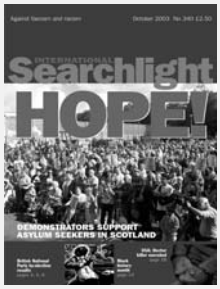
I enclose my donation of £ (Please make cheques payable to Searchlight Fighting Fund)

Please complete and return to Trade Union Friends Searchlight PO Box 1576, Ilford IG5 0NG

"Searchlight has made a very big contribution in the run up to the elections. The TUC greatly values joint work with Searchlight, for example anti fascist materials, the joint Searchlight TUC handbook and community based work. It is very important that Searchlight extends and develops this work – it is key to defeating fascism"

Brendan Barber general secretary TUC



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Make sure you branch/region/national union is affiliated to TUFS and actively works against the fascists. For more information call 020 7681 8647 or e-mail tufs@searchlightmagazine.com

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